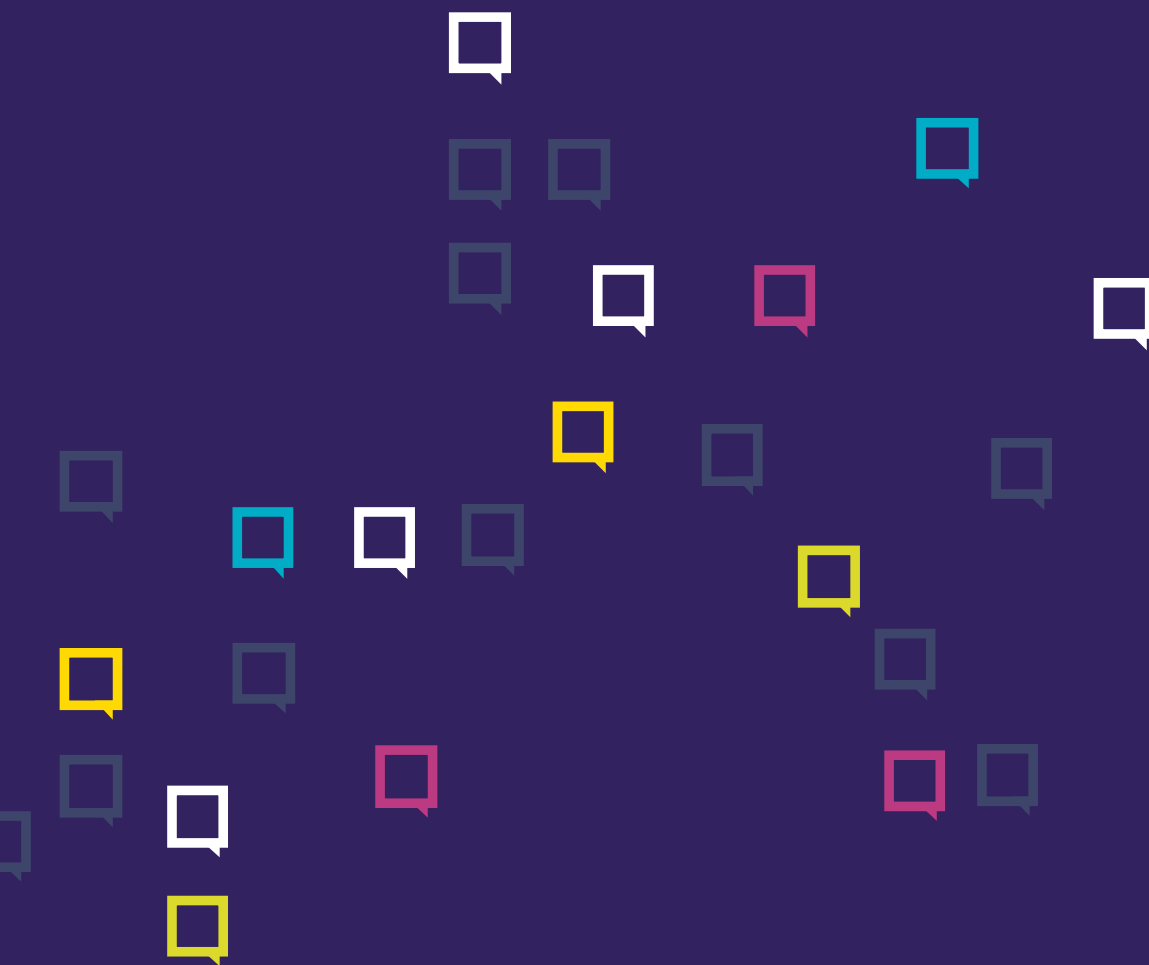


2025

KEY SKILLS POLICY & PRACTICE YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



This national guidance on key skills policy and practice is issued jointly by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). It is the central authoritative reference point for the current position on a range of key skills policy and implementation issues in England only. Key skills practitioners in Wales and Northern Ireland should contact their own regulatory authorities and/or funding bodies to determine the local position.

Readers are encouraged to incorporate relevant passages from this national guidance within their own briefing materials. Please use exact quotations, in the interests of consistency, and acknowledge the source where possible. Electronic copies of this guidance are available on the DfES, LSC and QCA websites. Hard copies are available, free of charge, from:

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This document begins with the latest key skills guidance from the DfES, LSC and QCA. Sections follow on the inspection process and the expectations of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). The document then looks at progression from basic to key skills, before answering a series of questions raised by key skills practitioners in schools, colleges and the work-based route. Chapter 10 'Sources of further information and advice' features a list of useful contacts and web-links.

Throughout this publication, references to annexes, sections or chapters are presented in bold type. The titles of other publications are presented in bold italicised type. References to annexes, chapters or sections in other publications are presented in italics.

This is the fourth edition of this guidance and replaces previous editions. The contents of this publication will apply for at least the current academic year (i.e. at least until August 2005) unless otherwise indicated in the text.

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1.1 What are the key skills?

The key skills are a range of essential generic skills that underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development. They are practical, applied skills relevant both to young people and to adult learners. They will often be developed through other subjects or main programmes, such as A levels or Apprenticeships, but may also be studied in their own right.

There are currently six key skills qualifications, each available at Levels 1 to 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). For learners¹ working towards the key skill qualifications in Communication, Application of Number or ICT, assessment comprises an internal (portfolio) and an external (test) component. For those working towards the key skills qualifications in Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance or Problem Solving, assessment is via an internal (portfolio) component alone.

1.2 14-19 Education and Skills

In July 2001, the then Secretary of State confirmed a wish to see key skill programmes offered to all post-16 learners. Where learners have not already achieved A*-C grades in GCSE English, Maths, or ICT, their programmes should lead to the formal acquisition of the relevant² key skills qualifications at level 2. Where young people are starting on advanced level programmes with the aim of pursuing a professional or higher qualification post-19, then institutions should support them in gaining at least one relevant³ key skill qualification at level 3. These expectations apply equally to apprentices and trainees on Government funded work-based programmes as well as to pupils and students in schools and colleges.

These expectations were restated in '14-19: Opportunity and Excellence' – the Government policy statement (published in January 2003) which included the following commitments:

- To help ensure that all young people are well equipped in literacy, numeracy and computer skills we will introduce an entitlement for them to continue studying up to age 19 until they reach the standard of a good GCSE or the corresponding Level 2 key skill qualification. Those going on to higher education or professional study after 19 should be encouraged to achieve a Level 3 qualification in at least one of these skill areas.
- Practical and analytical skills are equally essential in adult life and in the workplace. Existing programme and subject requirements do not always sufficiently emphasise these skills. We would welcome the Working Group's ideas as to how they are best addressed in programmes during the 14–19

¹ The term 'learner' is used in this guidance to include pupils, students and apprentices unless otherwise specified.

² At level 2, the relevant key skills qualifications in Communication, Application of Number and ICT are those for which the student has not already achieved a GCSE A*-C in English, Maths or ICT.

³ At level 3, a relevant key skills qualification in Communication, Application of Number or ICT is one which is suited to the needs of the young person wanting to pursue a professional or higher level qualification.

phase. The Group will wish to consider how their development can build on the learning and development of key skills, including teamwork, problem solving and improving one's own learning and performance, all of which are valued by many employers and universities.

The final report from the 14-19 Working Group was published in October 2004. In response, the Government's White Paper "14-19 : Education and Skills" (published in February 2005) showed how future provision would continue to focus on these skill areas:

- We will ensure that no-one can get a grade C or better in GCSE English or maths without mastering the functional elements.....and that these are the same in GCSEs, the key skills qualifications and the adult Skills for Life qualifications. Those who pass the functional element without succeeding in the GCSE will have their achievement in the functional unit separately recognised.
- GCSE ICT should be reviewed in a similar way to English and maths to identify a functional skills unit, building on the ICT key skills qualification and the ICT Skills for Life standards. For those not taking GCSE ICT, the functional unit should be available as a unit in its own right.
- Personal skills are those which give young people the ability to manage themselves and to develop effective social and working relationships. Thinking and learning skills mean knowing how to learn independently and adapt to a range of circumstances. Together these skills are essential for raising standards, further learning, employment and dealing with a range of real-world problems.
- In order to achieve a level 2 Diploma, young people must achieve level 2 in functional English and maths.

1.3 The Skills Strategy : Enhancing Employability

The Skills Strategy White Paper '21st Century Skills – Realising Our Potential' (published in July 2003) announced a series of specific measures to support key skills teaching, learning and assessment in Apprenticeship programmes. The full suite of measures - taken forward and delivered jointly by the DfES, LSC, QCA and SSDA - includes:

- securing wider take-up and use of the best practice teaching and learning models developed through the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP);
- promulgating the outcomes of the pilot on upfront teaching, so that candidates who would benefit can achieve the external tests early and concentrate on applied key skills learning during their Apprenticeship programmes;

- similarly, encouraging the use of Entry to Employment (E2E) as a route towards achievement in the tests where young people on E2E are seeking to progress into an Apprenticeship;
- continuing to promote and expand the availability of on-demand and on-screen testing, with clear benefits for learner motivation and achievement rates;
- introducing (from September 2004) more equitable funding arrangements for all six key skills qualifications within Apprenticeship programmes.

The 2003 White Paper also included an explicit focus on the spectrum of skills, including key skills, needed for both initial and sustainable employability:

- We will invite the Skills for Business Network to work with the QCA to review the qualifications available for each sector as a basis for (a) identifying which are most suitable to help adults develop the level 2 foundation skills for employability needed in their sector; and (b) where there are gaps, to work with awarding bodies to develop new qualifications. We look to the three organisations [QCA, LSC, SSDA] to define employability skills consistently, and seek to integrate the development of these skills into teaching and learning programmes.

This development is being taken forward through a three-stage process: broad agreement between key stakeholders on a common framework for employability skills; definition by the SSCs of the range of employability skills needed in each sector and an assessment of how these fit into the overall framework; translation of these definitions into learning programmes and, where appropriate, national certification.

1.4 Success for All : Teaching and Learning Quality

The Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP) has been a crucial agent in researching, developing and promoting best practice in teaching and learning strategies for cross-cutting skills such as the key skills. Its models and resources have informed the development of new teaching and learning frameworks under the Success for All initiative.

The KSSP is active across schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. One example is the project on Supporting Successful Outcomes with Literacy, Numeracy and Key Skills in Apprenticeships. This tested out approaches to improving performance by concentrating key and basic skills support intensively at the beginning of apprentice programmes. It also provided short training sessions for deliverers of basic/key skills training. A number of training providers undertook to develop and pilot these “front end” models of delivery – i.e. devising ways of introducing key and basic skills early in their programmes to fit with their varied circumstances.

The models were successful, resulting in a motivational experience for both teachers and learners, with a number of positive outcomes such as higher retention rates and increased motivation of learners. This success was welcomed by David Sherlock, the Chief Inspector of the Adult Learning Inspectorate who reported that teachers were extremely positive, learners benefited and that this can offer another way of delivering key skills. The lessons learned are being taken forward through the Convergence Project as well as the KSSP.

The DfES and partners are working to improve still further the synergies between the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP) and the complementary, but importantly different, focus of the Skills for Life Quality Initiative (SfL QI). We plan to implement an enhanced KSSP, building on the existing model, to address the needs of a wider spectrum of practitioners and establish a joint, parallel support service which will proactively promote a joint identity between Skills for Life and Key Skills to practitioners and providers. Our strategic goal is to integrate support for key skills and SfL practitioners still further with other mainstream quality enhancement initiatives, such as the new Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning.

1.5 Achievements in the key skills qualifications

Statistical information on key skills awards was last published through a Statistical First Release (SFR) on the 29th April 2004. The full text can be found at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000459/index.shtml>

The SFR presented statistics on the awards of key skills qualifications between October 2000 and September 2003 and refers to awards of key skills qualifications and candidates achieving key skills qualifications. The next statistical release, presenting awards up to September 2004 is due for release in April 2005.

Key points from the 2004 SFR:

- Between October 2000 and September 2003, 582,000 key skills qualifications were awarded to 360,000 candidates⁴. This represented a 70 per cent increase in achievement in the period October 2002 to September 2003.
- 37 per cent of the total awards were in Communication, 25 per cent in Application of Number and 38 per cent in ICT.
- The highest proportion of key skills qualifications (47 per cent) were achieved at Level 2; 38 per cent were achieved at level 1 and 15 per cent at levels 3 and 4.
- Almost three quarters of awards in key skills qualifications were achieved by those aged 17 and under. However, the number of awards achieved was growing most rapidly in the 18-24 age group (the share increased to 30 per cent in 2002/03 compared to 18 per cent in 2001/02).

⁴ All figures quoted here have been rounded

1.6 Fostering progression for Skills for Life Learners

Key skills qualifications provided the largest contribution to achievement of the 2004 Skills for Life PSA Target (750,000 adults to improve their literacy or numeracy). Enabling and encouraging progression from 'basic' to key skills (e.g. through the use of a common test) has always been at the heart of policy in this area. Section 6 has further details.

Accordingly, the DfES is now working closely with partners to secure more transparent progression routes from basic literacy, numeracy and ICT to the more demanding key skills and other forms of learning through the QCA-led Convergence Project. This involves identifying opportunities for yet greater convergence between the specification, teaching, assessment, funding and promotion of the *Skills for Life* and key skills standards and qualifications; designing and developing, with relevant partners, the mechanisms needed to support greater convergence; and consulting upon and securing implementation of those mechanisms.

2.1 The 2004 key skills standards

The new key skills standards (previously known as specifications) are now available. These standards are for use with candidates from September 2004. Candidates registered for the current key skills have until August 2006 to complete the qualifications and claim certification. *The key skills qualifications standards and guidance – communication, application of number and information and communication technology*, is now on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/6507.html.

Revisions to the standards have not been major and have been based on comments received by practitioners and key partners involved in key skills development. Centres should find the new standards require slightly less evidence but cover the same knowledge, skills and understanding that the previous key skills contained. The tests for key skills have not changed.

2.2 The wider key skills

From September 2004, Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance and Problem Solving will be available as pilot qualifications that will come within the National Qualifications Framework. Many teachers and trainers regard these key skills as equally important. Employers and higher education institutions also value evidence of these skills. Centres are encouraged to participate in the pilot and all successful learners will receive full qualification certificates when they have completed. UCAS is undertaking research to consider the place of these key skills areas in the UCAS tariff.

The personal skills development unit at level 5 is aimed at postgraduate/senior management learners. There is no qualification at this level.

2.3 Proxy qualifications

Proxy qualifications are those qualifications that have been agreed to assess the same knowledge and skills as aspects of the key skills qualifications. Because of this overlap, candidates can claim exemption from all or part of particular key skills qualifications for up to three years from the date of the award of the specific accredited proxy qualification. The use of proxies is distinct from the relaxation ruling (see section 8.5).

Examples of accredited proxy qualifications:

- GCE AS Use of Mathematics acts as a proxy for both test and portfolio for Application of Number at levels 1-3;
- GCE A-level Mathematics acts as a proxy for the test, but not the portfolio, for Application of Number at levels 1-3;
- Adult Certificates in Literacy and Numeracy (basic skills) at levels 1 and 2 count as proxies for the Communication or Application of Number key skills external tests at levels 1 and 2, respectively.

The same range of proxy qualifications is available to candidates in schools, colleges and the work-based learning route.

There is a strict three-year time limit from the date of award of the relevant proxy qualification, within which the learner must provide proof of achievement of the proxy and either submit a portfolio of evidence or claim the key skills qualification (as appropriate).

Qualifications that appear on the proxy list have been mapped for the type of overlap required and guarantee that the candidate has been assessed in the appropriate knowledge and skills. Only qualifications that have been accredited by the regulators for England (QCA), Wales (ACCAC), Northern Ireland (CCEA) and Scotland (SQA) can be included on the list of proxy qualifications.

The list is reviewed periodically to ensure that it is appropriate, and is available at **www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/603_1051.html**

Qualifications from other countries or qualifications that do not appear on this list are not agreed proxies and cannot be used as such.

2.4 Test opportunities

At levels 1 and 2, the tests are available flexibly to meet the needs of candidates and centres. In addition, awarding bodies also offer scheduled test opportunities for levels 1-4. Dates for 2004/05 are published on the QCA website at:

www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/603_1032.html

QCA has been supporting awarding bodies in the development of systems to offer the level 1 and 2 tests on screen. Many awarding bodies now offer the tests in this way and our research has shown that candidates often prefer to take the tests in this way. Over the coming year we will be working with awarding bodies to begin to explore the possibilities for different approaches to assessment that are offered by on screen testing.

Most awarding bodies are now able to offer feedback on test results at levels 1 and 2 within 7-10 days of the test being taken. For candidates taking tests on screen, pass / fail feedback can usually be supplied within 24 hours of the test being taken.

In response to requests from centres we will be making available an increased amount of up to date practice material for the tests at levels 1 and 2.

Please check the key skills area of the QCA website for regular updates on current work.

2.5 What the QCA is doing:

- Managing the implementation of on-demand and on-screen tests at levels 1 and 2
- Monitoring the pilot of the key skills of working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving
- QCA is working on two major projects, the Convergence project and the Embedding Project. Both these will help to increase take up and awareness of basic and key skills qualifications.

3.1 Introduction

Practitioners who require detailed guidance on, and information in respect of, funding of key skills across further education and work based learning should consult the following LSC Documents:

- Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2004/05
- Requirements for Funding Work-based Learning for Young People 2004/05
- Schools Sixth Forms: Funding Guidance 2004/05

These publications are available in electronic format on the LSC's website at www.lsc.gov.uk

It is not the intention to repeat funding information in this document which can be accessed in the LSC's guidance.

3.2 Key skills in further education (including sixth form colleges): 2004/05

In summary, for 16-18 full-time learners, the programme funding and fee element for the key skills of Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology are incorporated within the funding for entitlement. Funding is available for key skills qualifications for all part-time learners over 19.

Providers are expected to deliver key skills appropriate to the needs of the individual learner. Where learners have not already achieved A*-C grades in GCSE Maths, English or ICT, their programmes should lead to the acquisition of relevant key skills qualifications at level 2. Where learners are starting on advanced level study with the aim of pursuing a professional or higher qualification, then institutions should support them in gaining at least one relevant key skill qualification at level 3. Where these expectations have been met, learners will not be required to register for further key skills qualifications in order to continue to claim funding for the entitlement package. They will, however, be expected to continue with the tutorial and enrichment elements of the entitlement package.

Providers will be expected to share their plans for delivery of the entitlement (tutorial, key skills and enrichment arrangements) with local LSCs, and these plans will be reviewed as part of the regular meetings that local LSCs have with their providers. during the year.

3.3 Key skills for school sixth form pupils from August 2004

Only those schools on formula funding are entitled to additional funding for each learner for key skills provision, tutorial support and enrichment activities.

Approximately three quarters of schools are funded on the LSC formula. The remaining quarter of schools are on Real Terms Guarantee (RTG) funding, which protects their historic funding levels and does not trigger additional funding for key skills, tutorial support and enrichment.

Schools were informed of their confirmed 2004/05 allocations in December 2003. In 2004/05 for school sixth forms on formula funding, the entitlement will be funded at £750 per pupil.

Providers are expected to deliver key skills appropriate to the needs of the individual pupil. Where students have not already achieved A*-C grades in GCSE Maths, English or ICT, their programmes should lead to the acquisition of relevant key skill qualification at level 2.

Where students are starting on advanced level study with the aim of pursuing a professional or higher qualification, then schools should support them in gaining at least one relevant key skill qualification at level 3.

The LSC document 'School Sixth Forms: Funding Guidance for 2004/05', published in September 2003, details funding arrangements and current levels of funding for school sixth forms from August 2004 (see 'Sources of further information and advice').

3.4 Key skills in Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships 2004/05

From August 2004/05 key skills have their own funding rate. This has been introduced to simplify the funding methodology and to continue to move towards removing the differences in approach between work based learning and further education funding.

Within an Apprenticeship candidates must achieve, as a minimum, the level 1 key skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number. The Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) or other industry sector bodies have discretion to determine which of the remaining key skills and at what level are appropriate for each industry sector. This could involve all three key skills qualifications, by including Information Technology, and/or the wider key skills of Improving Own Learning and Performance, Problem Solving and Working with Others. It is expected that apprentices will take key skills at a level appropriate to their needs and abilities.

Within an Advanced Apprenticeship candidates must achieve, as a minimum, the key skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number at level 2. Frameworks that did not meet this mandatory minimum requirement have been revised and re-approved. It is for SSCs or other industry sector bodies to specify

which of the remaining key skills, and at what levels, are required for successful completion of an Advanced Apprenticeship.

3.5 Arrangements for partial achievement of key skills

Excluding work based learning and school sixth forms partial achievement of key skills can be claimed where:

- The external assessment (test) is achieved, or
- The portfolio has been successfully completed (i.e., the evidence portfolio has been internally verified and externally moderated and eligible for certification).

3.6 Adult Certificates of Literacy and Numeracy (basic skills) for full-time learners

3.6.1 Delivering basic skills to full-time learners aged 16-18 years

While it is still Ministers' expectation that the clear majority of full-time 16-18 year old learners should be undertaking the relevant key skills qualifications, the LSC acknowledges that for a small minority of these learners, basic skills qualifications (that is, the Adult Certificates in Literacy and Adult Numeracy) may be more appropriate as an initial aim.

3.6.2 Possible Reasons for a Manual Adjustment to a Final Funding Claim

In respect of Basic Skills within a learner's entitlement, where learners are following basic skills learning aims instead of key skills because, following diagnostic assessment, it is deemed more appropriate for them to do so, the Learner Information Suite (LIS) will not be able to calculate the entitlement funding correctly. In these situations the LIS funds the key skills element of entitlement funding as well as the basic skills alternative. This could lead to an overstatement of the entitlement funding and would warrant a manual adjustment.

Where the basic skills learning aim is the same size as the key skills component of entitlement funding, providers should adjust their claim downwards so that it does not include any funding for the key skills which are being replaced by basic skills. Where the basic skills learning aim is larger than the key skills component of entitlement funding, providers should further adjust their claim so that it includes funding for the additional hours delivered on the basic skills learning aim. It is assumed that the key skills component of the entitlement is approximately 180 guided learning hours (glh), or 60 glh per key skill. Therefore, depending on the size of the basic skill programme that replaces the key skills within the entitlement, only those hours above 60glh, 120glh, or 180 glh delivered on the basic skills alternative should be counted as "additional". These additional hours would attract the basic skills uplift and be funded through the load bands. Further information on this is available in the Addendum to Circular 04/03: FE ILR funding claims 2003/04.

4. OFSTED INSPECTION OF KEY SKILLS PROVISION IN COLLEGES

4.1 Introduction

Key skills are not graded as a separate area within college inspection reports. They are often referred to in the individual curriculum sections within the content of student's main programme of study. In part B of the report there is a paragraph on the effectiveness of the co-ordination and management of provision for the delivery of key skills which is informed by evidence from all curriculum inspectors.

OFSTED became responsible for inspecting sixth form, tertiary, general further education and specialist colleges in April 2001. The following guidance is taken from the 'Handbook for Inspecting Colleges' (HMI 464), published in May 2002, which can be found on the OFSTED website at

www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=2307

4.2 How will inspectors judge learners' achievements in key skills?

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which learners reach levels in key skills consistent with their main programme of study or training. Inspectors will focus on the key skills of Communication, Application of Number and IT. The wider key skills of Working with Others, Improving Own Learning and Performance, and Problem-Solving may also form part of students' learning programmes.

In their judgement of key skills achievements, inspectors will consider:

- the opportunities for students to study and gain accreditation for key skills; levels of attendance at key skills lessons;
- the standards reached against the level specifications, based on observations and scrutiny of students' work;
- the number and proportion of students completing key skills programmes and achieving qualifications at an appropriate level;
- how well learners are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and in the community;
- how well learners progress to relevant further education, training or employment;
- how well learners develop the attitudes and skills necessary to maintain lifelong learning, including the capacity to work independently and collaboratively.

4.3 How will inspectors judge the quality of key skills teaching?

Judgements will emphasise the impact of teaching on students' learning and achievements. Inspectors will also evaluate how well the teaching helps students to extend their competence in key skills.

The development of key skills is most effective when teachers take responsibility for developing them as part of their teaching and when students see the relevance of these skills to the course they are studying. In the best practice, the teaching of and support for key skills are provided in a variety of settings, including lessons, key skills workshops and resource centres which students can visit as they wish and study individually or in groups.

To reach a judgement on the teaching and development of key skills across the college, inspectors will assess whether:

- there is a college policy on key skills that applies to all programmes and all students;
- the strategy for implementing the policy ensures a coordinated approach across the college that is actively supported by senior managers;
- there are systematic procedures for initial assessment and learning support;
- key skills teaching is closely linked to students' main programmes;
- there is an appropriate range of teaching methods and modes of delivery;
- there is regular monitoring and review of students' progress;
- there are effective arrangements for internal verification and moderation;
- managers receive regular reports on key skills development across the college;
- there are opportunities for staff development and sharing good practice.

In relation to specific courses, inspectors will evaluate whether:

- students are learning the skills necessary to cope with the courses they are following;
- work is carefully marked, with correction of spelling, grammatical errors or inaccuracies in work with numbers;
- IT is used by students as an integral part of their courses;
- work is as professionally presented as it is reasonable to expect at the relevant stage of their course;
- students work collaboratively with their peers and others;
- key skills are integrated effectively with aspects of the practical work.

4.4 What are inspectors' expectations of initial assessment?

Initial assessment should be used to identify students' additional support needs. It should be carried out during induction and the results should be reported to the students without delay. Actions based on the outcomes of initial assessment should be incorporated into students' individual learning programmes. Support may be provided to individuals, to whole groups or through learning workshops. Inspectors will look to see whether the students have suitable opportunities to get the support they have been identified as needing and are receiving it.

Work-based apprentices and New Deal clients should receive, when they join their programme, an assessment of their basic and key skills and, where appropriate, occupational aptitude. The results of this assessment should be taken into account when devising their individual training plans and in deciding whether the apprentices and clients need additional learning support.

4.5 How will inspectors judge whether programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

This question considers how effectively courses reflect the needs and interests of students and enable them to achieve appropriate qualifications for further education, higher education or employment.

Inspectors will focus on:

- the extent to which students are offered coherent programmes of study with a variety of interesting and useful activities;
- the extent to which the reforms of advanced-level qualifications have broadened the curriculum and been effectively implemented, including the arrangements for the teaching of key skills.

4.6 How will inspectors judge the planning of courses and programmes?

Inspectors will not prescribe models for course organisation and management. They will assess the effectiveness of what is done in terms of its impact on students. Key skills will be an integral part of many students' courses. Inspectors will assess key skills provision in relation to college policies, the assessment requirements specified by the college or the examining body, and how effectively the teaching of key skills supports and enhances the main area of study. Work-based apprentices should have coherent training programmes that require them to carry out tasks that become progressively more complex and demanding.

4.7 What do inspectors look for in Learning Support?

Most colleges assess full-time students' learning support needs when they start their course. College staff may also have information from the students' schools, including records of achievement. Initial assessment may identify difficulties with literacy or numeracy, particular problems such as dyslexia or hearing impairment or, in the case of advanced-level students, some individuals who are gifted or talented. In the initial assessment of literacy and numeracy, many colleges use diagnostic tests to determine whether the students have the key skills necessary for the specific demands of the course, rather than simply assessing general levels of literacy and numeracy.

4.8 What are the characteristics which inform inspectors' judgements?

Very good or excellent provision:

- Pass rates and retention rates are well above sector averages.
- Results in any key skills that are examined are also very high.
- Key skills provision is well organised. A good range of enrichment activities enhances the curriculum.

Good or satisfactory provision:

- Pass rates and retention rates are at least in line with national averages.
- Most students attain the level expected in the key skills of Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology (IT), where relevant.
- The college offers a good range of post-16 courses at levels appropriate to students' needs. There are suitable arrangements for the development of the key skills.

The following may indicate unsatisfactory provision:

- A significant number of students' achievements in the key skills are too low for them to cope adequately with their course, or for them to have reasonable prospects of meeting the demands of further education and/or employment.

4.9 Plans for future Inspection Arrangements

From September 2005, college inspections will be guided by the principles set out in the revised Common Inspection Framework (CIF). The inspection team will be primarily involved in assessing the effectiveness of the institution in securing the achievements of individual learners and the quality of their experience at college. The CIF requires the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of provision; achievement and standards; and teaching and learning in curriculum areas and work-based contexts and leadership and management.

The new framework has 5, rather than 7, key questions with an additional requirement to assess the overall effectiveness of the college. The new framework and that for the inspection of schools is closely aligned.

4.9.1 The inspection of key skills

The inspection of key skills will be included in the inspection of individual areas of learning. Judgement about key skills will also be summarised in the main section on the overall quality of provision.

The development of key skills is most effective when teachers take responsibility for developing them as part of their teaching and when learners see the relevance of these skills to the course they are studying. In the best practice, key skills teaching takes place in a variety of settings, including lessons, key skills workshops and resource centres which learners can visit as they wish and study individually or in groups.

To reach a judgement on the teaching and development of key skills inspectors will assess whether:

- There is a college policy on key skills that applies to all programmes and all learners;
- The strategy for implementing the policy ensures a co-ordinated approach across the college that is actively supported by senior managers;
- There are systematic procedures for initial assessment and learning support;
- Key skills teaching is closely linked to learners' main programmes;
- There is an appropriate range of teaching methods and modes of delivery;
- There is regular monitoring and review of learners' progress;
- There are effective arrangements for internal verification and moderation;
- Managers receive regular reports on key skills development across the college;
- There are opportunities for staff development and sharing good practice.

In relation to specific courses, inspectors will evaluate whether:

- Learners are learning the skills necessary to cope with the courses they are following;
- Work is carefully marked, with correction of spelling, grammatical errors or inaccuracies in work with numbers;
- ICT is used by learners as an integral part of their courses, where appropriate;
- Work is as professionally presented as it is reasonable to expect at the relevant stage of their course;
- Learners work collaboratively with their peers and others.

5.1 What are the ALI's expectations of key skills providers in work-based learning?

Where key skills form part of a learning programme, they will be evaluated against each of the seven questions in the 'Common Inspection Framework'. The brief guidance below may be helpful to providers in understanding how the framework applies specifically to key skills.

5.2 How well do learners achieve?

Learners should be set challenging key skills targets. The minimum level of key skills undertaken by learners should be those specified in the appropriate apprenticeship framework, although some learners may need to begin their studies at a lower level. Where learners have already achieved key skills at the level specified in the framework, they may be offered the opportunity to work towards higher levels even though they will exceed the minimum requirements. Inspectors evaluate the extent to which these challenging targets have been met through the key skill attainment of current learners, achievement data for those who have left and pass rates for the external key skills tests.

5.3 How effective are teaching, training and learning?

Inspectors observe and evaluate the quality of key skills learning, both on- and off-the-job. It is expected that much of the key skills learning will be integrated with NVQ activities. Most learners will also need specific help in mastering some of the key skills techniques and underpinning knowledge. Arrangements should be in place to provide this support. Learners will also need guidance from trainers when practising and building their skills. Assessment on its own is not enough – teaching and training is an important part of any key skills programme. In some instances, learners may benefit from a concentrated period of key skills development at the beginning of their programme, before embarking on the NVQ.

5.4 How are achievement and learning affected by resources?

Trainers and assessors delivering key skills should be competent themselves in key skills and confident enough to make effective key skills training and assessment an integral part of training programmes. One way for staff to show their competence in key skills is to gain the key skills qualifications at the appropriate level – usually level 3 or above. Staff effectiveness in delivering key skills should be enhanced by a programme of professional development. Staff should be kept up to date with local and national development in key skills.

This could be achieved by attending local network meetings and training events.

There should be a suitable range of learning resources to support key skills learning and assessment, both on- and off-the-job learning sessions and independent study. These are likely to include paper-based and computer-based resources. Activities and assignments should be contextualised to meet learner interests and needs. It is good practice for candidates to practise and generate evidence for more than one key skill in the context of a single activity.

5.5 How effective are the assessment and monitoring of learners' progress?

There should be a comprehensive key skills initial assessment which successfully identifies areas in which a learner is already competent, and areas for further development. Initial assessment of key skills should not be confused with basic skills. Initial assessment may involve a range of techniques including discussion, observation, self-assessment and tests. Information gained through the initial assessment process should be carefully evaluated, discussed with the learner and used to plan an appropriate learning programme. Where appropriate, accreditation of prior learning in key skills should be provided. A 'blanket' approach to key skills, with all learners undertaking the same learning and assessment programme, is unlikely to meet individual needs.

Formative assessment should be undertaken regularly and used to monitor progress. Progress in key skills should be reviewed during formal progress review meetings attended by the learner, training provider and employer. Learners should be entered for external key skills tests only when considered competent. Learners should be thoroughly prepared for external tests, including the completion of practice papers under test conditions. All centres should have an internal verifier for key skills. Internal verification should take place regularly, sampling assessment decisions from all programme areas, candidates, assessors and key skills.

5.6 How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?

Inspectors will check to see that apprenticeship frameworks minimum requirements are being met. Some learners may undertake additional key skills to those listed in the framework, according to their work role and personal aspirations. Full account should be taken of prior learning to avoid unnecessary duplication of work.

Arrangements for training and assessment in key skills should be clearly documented and learners should be allocated time for this during working hours.

Links between key skills and NVQ should be maximised to provide a coherent learning programme. Completion of key skills should not be left until the end of the apprenticeship programme.

5.7 How well are learners guided and supported?

The importance and benefits of key skills should be explained to learners at the outset, in a positive manner. Learners should be given full information on key skills during their induction programme. This should include details of which key skills are to be undertaken, the level, content and assessment methods. Learners should also be given copies of the key skills standards. The induction programme should be interesting, involving learners in practical activities.

Providers should have effective partnerships with employers.

Employers should be well-informed about key skills and encouraged to support key skill development in a number of ways. These include motivating learners, helping them to identify opportunities to develop and demonstrate their skills at work, allowing time for key skills and giving apprentices opportunities outside their normal work to develop skills which don't fall naturally inside their job roles.

Some workplace supervisors may be able to undertake key skills assessments as long as they are competent and confident assessors. Others may supply witness statements of having observed learners demonstrating competence in the workplace.

5.8 How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

The provider should have a clear policy on key skills. Responsibility for key skills across the organisation should be clearly designated, usually to a senior member of staff. There may be strategic objectives for key skills expressed in, for example, a business plan. Procedures for key skills should be documented and understood by managers, staff and employers. The provider should set and meet targets for learner achievement of key skills and pass rates for external tests.

Key skills should be included in quality assurance arrangements. Managers and staff should evaluate the effectiveness of key skills provision and include the evaluation in the annual self-assessment report. There should be a development plan for key skills. Managers should allocate suitable resources for key skills, including staff time and learning materials. Arrangements for administering key skills external tests should be robust, ensuring that awarding body guidance is followed.

5.9 Key skills in Entry 2 Employment (E2E)

Key skills and basic skills at a level appropriate to the individual learner form an important part of the E2E entitlement curriculum. It is expected that most learners will be involved in work in the areas of communication, number, and IT at some point in their E2E programme. It would be expected that all E2E learners would improve their basic/key skills by at least one level above that identified in their initial assessment. However, the ideal should be to bring the majority of learners to the key skills of Communication and Application of Number at level 1, particularly for those progressing to Apprenticeships. Inspection judgements relating to key skills will be arrived at in a similar way to that described for other learning programmes within the ALI remit. Information about key skills achievements by E2E learners will be collected through a national data collection form devised by the LSC in consultation with ALI. This form will enable inspectors to determine how many learners have attempted key skills qualifications and how many have successfully completed them.

6. PROGRESSION FROM ADULT CERTIFICATES IN LITERACY AND NUMERACY (BASIC SKILLS) TO KEY SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS

6.1 National Qualifications Framework (NQF) table

The following table shows the broad relationship between the levels of Adult Certificate in Literacy and Numeracy qualifications and key skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number:

National Qualifications Framework	Adult Certificates in Literacy and Numeracy	Key skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number
Level 4		Level 4 (test + portfolio)
Level 3		Level 3 (test + portfolio)
Level 2	Level 2 (test only)	Level 2 (test + portfolio)
Level 1	Level 1 (test only)	Level 1 (test + portfolio)
Entry	Entry Level 3	
Entry	Entry Level 2	
Entry	Entry Level 1	

The Certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy at levels 1 and 2 are aligned to the Communication and Application of Number key skills qualifications, respectively, at levels 1 and 2. The national standards for adult literacy and numeracy are more detailed than the key skills specifications and they relate most directly to part A of the Communication and Application of Number key skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2, amplifying the knowledge, techniques and understanding described in part A of the key skills specifications at the equivalent level. The external tests for Adult Literacy and Numeracy at levels 1 and 2 are the same as the external tests for key skills Communication and Application of Number, respectively, at levels 1 and 2.

The Secretary of State's grant letter to the LSC makes clear the high priority accorded to basic skills, including the expectation that the LSC will "tackle the basic skills needs of those aged 16-18 who still need further help with literacy and numeracy in order to progress." In the context of adult basic skills, 'adult' is defined as any learner over the age of 16 (i.e. no longer in compulsory education). Prior to enrolment onto basic skills learning aims, learners should have a demonstrable need for this provision, shown through diagnostic assessment.

In instances where a learner has enrolled onto key skills programmes in Communication and Application of Number and achieves the external test, but does not complete their portfolio of evidence, this is regarded by the LSC as partial achievement of the key skills qualification even if the awarding body offers the candidate the opportunity to be awarded the Certificate in Adult Literacy or the Certificate in Adult Numeracy instead.

6.2 How should achievement of the key skills external test, but not the portfolio, be recorded?

Learners who achieve the key skills external test but do not achieve their portfolio of evidence should be recorded in the ILR as having partial achievement of their key skill qualification. These learners may also count towards the national targets for adult literacy and numeracy where this partial achievement moves them up by a level.

Learners who achieve only the portfolio will not count towards the national targets.

Where a learner partially achieves Application of Number and Communication at Level 1 or Level 2 but the awarding body subsequently issues a certificate in Adult Numeracy or Literacy, respectively, the ILR should reflect the individual's original learning aim and partial achievement outcome. Achievement of a Certificate in Adult Literacy or Adult Numeracy is also a proxy for the Communication or Application of Number key skills external test.

6.3 If a learner is studying key skills and needs additional support, would we be able to draw down funding through the Additional Learning Support mechanism?

Additional Learning Support (ALS) can be claimed for full-time, 16-18 year old key skills learners, where this will help learners gain access to, progress towards and successfully achieve their learning goals. The types of ALS that may be provided for learners are described in the LSC publication Funding Guidance for Further Education 2004/05.

In April 2004, the LSC published a policy statement confirming the overall approach for ALS in the post-16 sector. More detailed guidance in respect of ALS can be accessed on the newly established section of the LSC's website at www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/FundingLearning/AdditionalLearningSupport/default.htm

6.4 What support is available to those wishing to progress from basic skills to key skills?

Learners who have achieved an approved Adult Numeracy or Literacy Certificate qualification must complete and achieve a key skills portfolio of evidence in Communication or Application of Number, respectively, in order to gain the key skills qualification at the same level in Communication or Application of Number.

7.1 Will students who are re-taking GCSE qualifications be required to register for the relevant key skill qualification at level 2?

The Secretary of State expects key skill programmes to be offered to all post-16 students; where students have not already achieved A*-C grades in GCSE English, Maths or ICT those programmes should lead to the formal acquisition of the relevant key skills qualifications at level 2. For example, students on a 2 year programme re-taking GCSEs in English, Maths or ICT who have not achieved an A*-C grade in these subject areas by the end of their first year of post-16 study would then be expected in their second year to be working towards and registered for the relevant key skill qualification(s) at level 2.

Local institutions will make professional judgements on the most appropriate route (GCSEs or key skills qualifications) to level 2 achievement in the first year of post-16 study, taking account of individual students' needs and preferences. Training providers and teachers are reminded that, in order to be eligible for the entitlement funding, key skills learning must be included as part of the student's post-16 programme.

7.2 What is a "relevant" key skills qualification at level 3?

At level 3, a relevant key skills qualification in Communication, Application of Number or ICT is one which is suited to the needs of the young person aiming to pursue a professional or higher level qualification. The precise choice of level 3 qualification(s) must be governed by an assessment of what will best support progression towards and preferably beyond the professional or higher level qualification goal.

7.3 Can entitlement funding be claimed in year 2 if the expectation is met in year 1?

The Secretary of State's expectations are that students who are aiming to pursue a professional or higher qualification post-19 should be supported in gaining at least one relevant key skill qualification at level 3. This is the minimum eligibility for the entitlement element of funding for students.

The entitlement funding can still be claimed for college students who have met all these expectations in the first year of their advanced level programme and are continuing with the tutorial and enrichment elements of the entitlement package. Students may choose to gain more than one key skill qualification at level 3, including the wider key skills qualifications.

7.4 What are the mandatory requirements on institutions to enable them to claim entitlement funding?

All learners must be following a programme which includes tutorial, enrichment and key skills learning. However, providers are reminded of the Secretary of State's expectations for post-16 learners regarding achievement of key skills, which are set out in chapter 1 of this document.

7.5 Can learners follow the wider key skills qualifications instead of the key skills qualifications?

A more tailored approach to designing programmes should make it possible for students who have already achieved the Government's expectations for key skills achievement (i.e. level 2 in Communication, Application of Number and ICT plus, for those aiming for a professional or higher qualification post-19, at least one level 3 in these subjects) to seek formal assessment and certification in the wider key skills if they so wish (see chapter 1 'Guidance from DfES' for a fuller explanation of government expectations for key skills).

7.6 What funding can be claimed for the wider key skills?

The wider key skills qualifications have now been accredited into the National Qualifications Framework and, from September 2004, are separately fundable through the loadbands.

Funding may be claimed for the wider key skills in addition to entitlement funding, provided that additional guided learning hours are delivered at the appropriate level. However, the wider key skill qualifications may also be delivered as enrichment activity, in which case no additional funding should be claimed.

7.7 Will there be funding for Mathematics and English GCSEs and the corresponding key skills qualifications at level 2?

Yes, GCSEs in Mathematics and English will continue to be eligible for funding in addition to the entitlement funding.

7.8 How will the delivery of key skills be monitored in colleges?

The LSC will monitor key skills through their continuous 'quality monitoring activities' which are part of the continuous cycle of performance review. The key performance review area 'Learner Experience and Performance' specifically relates to the monitoring of key skills. Key skills will be inspected as part of OFSTED's and the ALI's planned cycle of inspections of all institutions (see chapters 4 and 5).

External auditors will check that learners meet the eligibility criteria for LSC funded entitlement; i.e. that they are aged under 19 on 31 August in the calendar year in which they start their programme of study and that they are studying on a full-time basis, defined as: 'enrolled on a programme of at least 450 guided learning hours in any 12-month period, including learners who withdraw after a census date'.

7.8.1 What information should the college document/maintain in order to inform the monitoring visits?

Monitoring of key skills is part of overall monitoring. The depth and breadth of monitoring specific to key skills needs to be commensurate with its scale in the context of education and training overall.

Sources of evidence for learner experience and performance may include, for example:

- inspection grades and more detailed findings in inspection reports (where available);
- learners' success rates; as well as the results of learner satisfaction surveys. These may specifically monitor learners' views about key skills delivery.

Supplementary information may also be derived from:

- post-inspection action plan (as appropriate);
- ILR.

7.9 Do universities value and recognise key skills achievement?

Success in the key skills qualifications⁵ attracts UCAS Tariff points: 10 points for each key skill of Communication, Application of Number and Information Technology at level 2 and 20 points at level 3. So a student who achieves all three key skills at level 3 will obtain 60 points, the same as for a grade A at AS level. Universities take a variety of approaches to recognising these Tariff points for offer purposes.

⁵ The key skills qualifications in Improving Own Learning and Performance, Working with Others and Problem Solving will attract UCAS Tariff Points for HE entry from 2007 onwards.

The published indicative entry requirements for 2004 entry showed that 240 UCAS member institutions (74%) have at least one course where key skills achievement is encouraged, and around 49% have at least one course where key skills tariff points are counted towards an offer.

It is true that many universities admissions tutors do not explicitly require key skills achievement, usually because not all students have access to key skills programmes. Recent experience is that universities which do not require key skills achievement for the initial offer will still take this into account when making final decisions on applicants.

There have been two further significant developments to the UCAS website. Firstly, a 'tariff calculator' has been created. This enables a candidate to enter their A level, AS and AVCE grades along with their achievements in the individual key skills qualifications so that their total Tariff points can be calculated. Secondly, the 'Entry Profiles' in the courses database: each Profile includes a listing for skills that are essential to the field of study and the aim is to include all university courses, around 50,000 in all. As well as signalling the value of key skills to applicants, this process is encouraging admissions tutors and course teams to consider underpinning skills and to make them explicit.

The Government policy statement '14-19: Opportunity and Excellence' announced the introduction of an entitlement for all young people to continue studying up to age 19 until they reach the standard of a good GCSE or the corresponding level 2 key skills qualification in Communication, Application or Number or ICT. This entitlement should enable more schools and colleges to offer key skills and thus encourage more HE institutions to expect key skills achievement. Students going on to higher education after 19 should be encouraged to achieve a level 3 qualification in at least one of these skill areas.

7.10 Where can I get help with bringing key skills into programmes?

QCA's advice on managing the post-16 curriculum can be found on their website at: www.qca.org.uk/14-19/11-16-schools/index_s2-0-curric-planning.htm

Practitioners and programme managers in schools and colleges can also get advice and support directly from the Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP), as can practitioners in the work-based route.

The KSSP can be contacted via its website www.keyskillssupport.net or by phoning the dedicated help lines:

For schools and colleges: 0870 872 8081

For the work-based learning route: 0845 602 3386

The support available includes practitioner networks, training events, consultancy services and briefings; materials development and evaluation (for example, guides to key skills within a range of A level courses, guide to management of key skills in colleges, others aimed specifically at the work-based route such as 'Working with Employers'); information for learners ('Essential Key Skills', 'Simple Guide to Key Skills'); communications (website, newsletter, a helpline).

7.11 Which categories of students do not need to be registered with an awarding body for the key skills qualifications?

Students' programmes should be tailored to meet their individual needs and in line with the Secretary of State's expectations (set out in 7.1 and 7.2.) Only students who have already met those expectations in full would not need to register for further key skills qualifications, although even these students may choose to gain further key skills qualifications or the wider key skill qualifications as well.

Providers are reminded that all candidates working towards achieving a key skills qualification must be registered with an appropriate awarding body; otherwise the approved key skills qualification cannot be awarded.

A list of awarding bodies currently offering key skills qualifications can be found at Annex 1.

7.12 How should key skills activity for learners who are not registering with an awarding body be recorded on the ILR?

All learners following key skills programmes are eligible for the entitlement funding provided they are also receiving tutorial and enrichment activities. The current guidance for recording data on the ILR is published in the LSC publication 'Specification of the Individualised Learner Record Batch Data Capture File for 2004/05' (see 'Sources of further information and advice').

Institutions are requested to return information about all the key skills qualifications on which a learner is enrolled to study. This includes both those learners who are registered with an appropriate awarding body for key skills qualifications and those who are not.

8.1 What are the minimum key skills requirements?

Key skills and the external tests will continue to be an integral part of apprenticeship frameworks. This will allow all apprentices to complete the appropriate framework by reliably securing the underpinning skills that will fit them for future careers as well as for their first job.

Those engaged on an Apprenticeship must achieve, as a minimum, the key skills qualifications in Communication and Application of Number at Level 1.

Similarly, those working on an Advanced Apprenticeship must achieve, as a minimum, key skills qualifications at level 2 in Communication and Application of Number.

However, there is some flexibility around how these goals may be achieved: see sections 8.4 and 2.3 for details of proxy qualifications (which may exempt apprentices from taking all or part of a key skills qualification), and section 8.5 for information about the relaxation ruling (which exempts apprentices with the appropriate GCSE/AS/A levels from having to take level 2 Communication and/or Application of Number key skills qualifications).

8.2 What further key skills learning opportunities should be offered?

It is for Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) or other industry sector bodies to specify which additional key skills, if any, and at what levels are required for successful completion of an apprenticeship framework. This could include the key skills qualifications in ICT, Improving Own Learning and Performance, Problem Solving and Working with Others. Providers will need to ensure that apprentices have opportunities to take the key skills qualifications at the level or levels appropriate to their needs and abilities as well as the requirements of the framework.

The Government wants to ensure that all apprentices have the opportunity to improve their key skills to levels consistent with their abilities, aspirations and apprenticeship framework. In other words, apprentices should be encouraged to take key skills at a level appropriate to their needs, potential, and framework requirements. Once initial assessment is undertaken and agreement reached on which key skills should be taken and at which levels, this should be recorded in apprentices' individual apprenticeship plans. The reasons why a particular course of action is being taken should also be recorded. In summary, therefore:

- Providers must ensure minimum achievement levels.

Candidates on an Apprenticeship who do not possess a GCSE A*-C in Maths and English (thereby exceeding the level 1 requirement) must achieve, as a minimum, the key skills qualifications of Application of Number and Communication at level 1 respectively.

All Advanced Apprentices will need to attain a minimum of level 2 in the key skills qualifications of Application of Number and Communication for successful completion of an Advanced Apprenticeship or have achieved a GCSE A*-C in Maths and English respectively.

- Providers should encourage further learning opportunities.

Although it may be more than the minimum requirement set out in industry frameworks, the Government is keen that apprentices be encouraged to improve their key skills. Where the required key skills qualifications or A*-C GCSEs have been achieved by young people before starting their framework, initial assessment should determine whether individuals in this category need to achieve key skills at a level higher than they already have. This would be based on what is needed to succeed in the chosen occupation and/or the needs and abilities of the apprentice. The level of key skills attainment will be discussed and agreed during initial assessment and recorded through Individual Apprenticeship Plans.

8.3 What about the wider key skills?

These skills are valued by employers and higher education institutions and are important to lifelong learning. The wider key skills (Working with Others, Problem Solving, Improving Own Learning and Performance) have now been accredited as qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework.

The value placed by employers on these skills has been evident from their inclusion in frameworks prior to them becoming qualifications. In addition, other apprentices who have already achieved the Government's expectations (Level 2 in Communication, Application of Number and ICT and, for those aiming for a professional or higher qualification post-19, achievement in at least one level 3 in these subjects) should be encouraged to pursue formal assessment and certification in the wider key skills.

8.4 Will all Apprentices pursuing a key skills qualification have to take the external assessment (test) component?

Candidates are required to achieve the externally set and marked test component as well as the portfolio component in order to achieve the key skills qualifications in Communication, Application of Number or ICT.

Some learners will have a proxy qualification as defined by current QCA guidance (see section 2.3 for details and time limits). For example, GCSEs in English or Maths at grades A*-C (or the Adult Literacy or Numeracy Certificate at level 2) will exempt an apprentice from the externally set and marked tests in Communication and Application of Number at level 2; GCSEs in English, Maths at grades D-G (or

the Adult Literacy or Numeracy Certificate at level 1) will exempt an apprentice from the corresponding externally set and marked tests at level 1. This use of proxies as a means of achieving the key skills qualifications is distinct from the 'relaxation ruling' (see section 8.5).

Introduction of the externally set and marked test component should help providers to reduce the time and resources currently devoted to the portfolio component, which is now less demanding than previously. Assessment in the work-based learning route is now on the same basis as that in schools and colleges, requiring evidence both of possession of the skills to a consistent standard and of their application in a range of work-related settings.

8.5 What is the relaxation ruling?

The relaxation ruling allows apprentices who started on or after 1 September 2001, and who have achieved a grade A*-C GCSE in English and/or Mathematics, to complete their frameworks without being required to take the level 2 Communication and/or Application of Number key skills qualifications. This relaxation is designed to enable apprentices to concentrate on developing other key skills or improving their Communication or Application of Number by progressing to level 3.

This also applies to those who have achieved a GCE A/AS level at grade A-E in English Language, English Literature, or English Language and Literature and also GCE A/AS level at grade A-E in Mathematics, Pure Mathematics, or Further Mathematics (for the Communication and Application of Number key skills qualifications respectively).

From 1st August 2004, achievement of the GCSE or A/AS level must be no longer than five years before the date of registration on the apprenticeship framework (this replaces the previous three year limit). For framework completion purposes, those achieving an A*-C GCSE or A/AS level in English or Mathematics in the summer are deemed to have been certified on the 31 August, while the date for those achieving during the winter months is deemed to be 31 March.

The relaxation is distinct from the use of proxy qualifications (which is detailed in section 8.4 and 2.3).

8.6 What if a Sector Skills Council decides that even if an Advanced Apprenticeship candidate possesses English and Maths (A*-C) GCSE, they must still achieve Application of Number and Communication at level 2?

The view of the Apprenticeship Approvals Group (AAG) is that SSCs or other industry sector bodies should apply the relaxation announced by Government (see section 8.5).

However, if an SSC or other industry sector body decides that Application of Number and Communication level 2 are necessary for skills development, irrespective of the qualifications an individual already possesses, the SSC or other industry sector body will have to put a clear rationale to AAG.

8.7 What action should Sector Skills Councils and other industry sector bodies be taking?

SSCs should ensure that their Apprenticeship and Advanced Apprenticeship frameworks reflect the current arrangements for key skills. Approval for any proposed changes must be sought through the Apprenticeship Approval Group.

The LSC national office can advise on likely approval limits. SSCs should also specify in their frameworks that, under the relaxation ruling, prior achievement of GCSE A*-C grades or A/AS level in English and Maths will be acceptable for the award of the Advanced Apprenticeship Completion Certificate instead of level 2 key skills qualifications in Application of Number and Communication (see section 8.5 for details).

Where an SSC has received approval for a revised framework it is important that they notify the local LSCs and other key partners (such as providers) to inform them of the changes and when they apply from. This is extremely important with regard to the award of the Apprenticeship Completion Certificate.

8.8 How will training providers be monitored?

The LSC will monitor key skills through quality monitoring visits as an aspect of the performance review area, 'Learner Experience and Performance'. Key skills will be inspected as part of the Adult Learning Inspectorate's planned cycle of inspections of all providers (see chapter 5). In addition, discussions with staff and students will confirm whether key skills programmes are being delivered in line with government expectations and as set out in the provider's strategic plan.

8.9 What progress can the learner expect to make on key skills while on an Entry to Employment (E2E) programme.

All learners undertaking E2E will have their basic/key skills needs identified in their initial assessment along with their vocational, personal and social development needs. Their personal and learning objectives will be recorded in their E2E Programme document (part of the E2E Passport). Objectives will need to be simply and clearly expressed, measurable, realistic and achievable; they must also provide a degree of challenge for the young person and be relevant to the outcome the learner is realistically aiming towards. All learners can expect their E2E Programme document to identify improvement in basic/key skills.

Although not a mandatory requirement of the programme, it is the aspiration that the majority of learners will make progress towards Communication and Application of Number at level 1. This will be particularly important for those progressing onto Apprenticeships. Progress towards acquiring basic/key skills will be supported, including the opportunity, where appropriate, for the young person to undertake basic/key skills tests and/or compile evidence of skills learned. Within E2E the emphasis will be on innovative, integrated and imaginative support towards achievement.

Further guidance in respect of basic/key skills in E2E and basic/key skills within the E2E pre-apprenticeship offer can be found in the **E2E Entitlement Curriculum** (March 2004) and the E2E Pre Apprenticeship Offer (July 2004) which are available on the LSC website.

8.10 What role do key skills have in work-based learning where there are no approved apprenticeship frameworks?

The LSC has issued guidance in respect of work based learning where there are no apprenticeships (NVQ Learning Policy Statement, August 2004). In those sectors where frameworks do not presently exist or where specialist arrangements may be granted for the learner, every effort must be made to deliver a coherent learning programme. That coherent learning programme may be in the form of a temporary framework (authorised by and agreed with the local LSC), which must include appropriate qualifications in literacy and numeracy at level 1 for a level 2 temporary framework, or at level 2 for a level 3 temporary framework.

9. SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Key Skills Support Programme (KSSP)

The Key Skills Support Programme aims to help and provide resources for practitioners in training providers, schools and colleges to improve the quality of key skills provision and to support the preparation of young people for the key skills qualifications.

Website: www.keyskillssupport.net

The support available includes practitioner networks, training events, consultancy services and briefings; materials development and evaluation (for example, guides to key skills within a range of A level courses, guide to management of key skills in colleges, others aimed specifically at the work-based route such as 'Working with

Employers'); information for learners ('Essential Key Skills', 'Simple Guide to Key Skills'); communications (website, newsletter, a helpline).

The KSSP operates two help-lines:

Help for practitioners in schools and colleges (through the Learning and Skills Development Agency): 0870 872 8081 or email kssp@LSDA.org.uk

Help for practitioners in the work-based teaching and learning route (through Learning for Work Ltd: 0845 602 3386 or email helpline@lfw.org.uk

Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds in England.

LSC Helpline: 0870 900 6800

E-mail: info@lsc.gov.uk

Website: www.lsc.gov.uk

LSC online information referred to in this publication: Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2004/2005 is on the LSC website at:

www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/FundingLearning/FurtherEducation/Funding_Guidance04_05.htm

School Sixth Forms: Funding Guidance for 2004/5

Available on the LSC website at:

www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Documents/SubjectListing/FundingLearning/Schoolsandsixthforms/default.htm

The Specification of the Individualised Learner Record for 2004/05

To access this online, go to

www.lsc.gov.uk/National/Partners/Data/default.htm

On the left hand drop down menu, click on 'Data collections'.

On the next drop down menu, click on 'ILR', then click on 'ILR Specifications'.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

Website: www.qca.org.uk

The key skills qualifications specifications and guidance, which includes an introductory section, is available on the QCA website at:

www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/5333.html

The list of recognised proxy qualifications, scheduled monthly assessment dates at levels 1 and 2 for 2003/04 and other useful information can be found on the QCA website at: **www.qca.org.uk/qualifications/types/603.html**

The QCA Basic and Key Skills team can be contacted on 020 7509 5555

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

Website: www.dfes.gov.uk

Information about the White Paper '21st Century Skills – Realising Our Potential' (often referred to as The Skills Strategy) can be found at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/skillsstrategy/

The National Test Toolkit, which contains comprehensive information about the National Tests, including practice tests in paper based and on-screen formats and a comparison table of the awarding bodies is available from DfES Publications on 0845 60 222 60 (please quote reference: SFL NTT).

ESOL qualifications

A detailed list of all accredited ESOL qualifications for 2002-4 is now available on the teaching and learning section of the readwriteplus website:

www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/ESOL_Qualifications_Report

On-line mapping of adult literacy and Numeracy standards to occupational standards.

The on-line maps are intended for use in training, curriculum planning and materials development. The web site is now live at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/nosmapping/

The DfES Key Skills Policy Team can be contacted by writing to:

Key Skills Policy Team, Department for Education and Skills
Room E3c, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ;

or by e-mailing: **key.skills@dfes.gsi.gov.uk**

To order hard copies of this publication, call 0114 259 4731
or e-mail **key.skills@dfes.gsi.gov.uk**

Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)

For information about the ALI visit **www.ali.gov.uk**

or write to:

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Spring Place, Coventry Business Park, Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UD
Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

For information about OFSTED visit **www.ofsted.gov.uk/**

or write to:

OFSTED, Alexandra House, Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE

ANNEX 1: AWARDING BODIES CURRENTLY OFFERING KEY SKILLS QUALIFICATIONS

Awarding Body	Website	Contact Number
ASDAN	www.asdan.co.uk	0117 941 1126
AQA	www.aqa.org.uk	0161 953 1180
BHTB	www.bhtb.co.uk	01638 560 743
CACHE	www.cache.org.uk	01727 847636
City & Guilds	www.city-and-guilds.co.uk	020 7294 2800
CCEA	www.ccea.org.uk	028 9026 1200
EAL	www.eal.org.uk/EAL.nsf/?Open	0870 240 6889
*London Qualifications Ltd (EDEXCEL)	www.edexcel.org.uk	0870 240 9800
ETCAL	www.etcni.org.uk/services.htm	028 9032 9878
HAB	www.hab.org.uk	020 8579 2400
IMI	www.motor.org.uk	01992 511 521
*Education Development International plc (LCCI Examinations Board)	www.lccieb.com/Lcci/Home/Index.asp	020 8309 3000
NCFE	www.ncfe.org.uk	0191 239 8095
OCR	www.ocr.org.uk	024 7647 0033
Pitman Qualifications	www.pitmanqualifications.com	020 7294 2800
QFI	www.qfi.co.uk	01952 520210
VTCT	www.vtct.org.uk	02380 684 500
WJEC	www.wjec.co.uk/exams.html	029 2026 5000

* These awarding bodies have recently changed their name.

ANNEX 2: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAG	Apprenticeship Approval Group
ACCAC	Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales/Curriculum Council for Wales
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
AA	Advanced Apprenticeship
AoN	Application of Number (key skills qualification)
CCEA	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Comm	Communication (key skills qualification)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
E2E	Entry to Employment
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FE	Further Education
GCE	General Certificate of Education; A-levels, AS-levels
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
glh	Guided learning hours
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
IOLP	Improving own learning and performance (wider key skill)
ISR	Individualised Student Record
IT	Information Technology (key skill qualification)
LfW	Learning for Work
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PS	Problem Solving (wider key skill)
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
RTG	Real Terms Guarantee
SFR	Statistical First Release
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Agency
UCAS	University and Colleges Admissions Service
Ufi	University for Industry
WWO	Working with others (wider key skill)

Tell us what you think!

If you have suggestions for information that could be included in future editions of 'Key skills, policy & practice – Your questions answered', we would like to hear from you.

You can either:

1. e-mail us at **key.skills@dfes.gsi.gov.uk**
2. write to us at: Key skills policy team, E3C, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ
3. call us on: 0114 259 4731.

Please be sure include your name, address and (if relevant) details of the organisation you work for or represent.

This publication is the product of close co-operation between a number of agencies and bodies. The editors would like to thank their colleagues from (in alphabetical order):

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